

Communication Matters

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NEW INTERPRETING SERVICE ONLINE

Click the web site link below, then click the lower right box for a demo of Interpreting Online. This service is available on very short notice.

www.csdinterpretingonline.com/

PEPNet Video Conference

Defining English Language Development and Deafness: Language and Literacy Programs for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Educational Settings.

Topics:

- Language development and hearing loss.
- Student assessment & class placement.
- Educational interpreters role in developmental classes.

February 17, 2005

www.pepnet.org

\$100 for each downlink

Deaf Videoconferencing Service Model: An Innovative Approach

Based on an article by Lynnette Johnson, Utah State Office of Rehabilitation that was published in the Oct./Nov./Dec. 2004 issue of The Journal of Rehabilitation, Vol. 70, Number 4, pages 33-37.

Not enough interpreters.

No mental health services.

Counselors with limited skills in serving deaf/hh individuals.

No access to evaluation.

These are some of the problems frequently identified by counselors and rehabilitation customers outside the metro areas of Michigan. The Utah State Office of Rehabilitation was faced with these same problems. In response they partnered with post-secondary education, Deaf/HH service providers, public and private interpreter services, and grant recipients to implement videoconferencing services throughout the state.

A unique application of videoconferencing technology was implemented in South Carolina in 1994. The state's only sign language proficient psychiatrist was confined to her home due to pregnancy. Previously, she had driven long miles through the state's rural counties to serve 300 people who were both deaf and mentally ill. The state established a videoconferencing network in several locations around the state, linked to the psychiatrist's home. The psychiatrist was able to continue her practice. The model was so successful that the psychiatrist, "now reports seeing three times the previous number of clients in only sixty percent of the time." Savings in time and money have been realized due to reduced travel time and expenses. (Telehealth News, 1998)

For videoconferencing to provide successful communication between signers, the quality of service must provide clear and smooth video. Thirty frames per second (fps) is the required rate to stream full-motion video for clear reading of lip movements, finger spelling, and

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Past issues of Communication Matters are posted on the **E-Learn Deaf & Hard of Hearing Resource Center**. Information or news related to Deaf or Hard of Hearing services may be forwarded to Julie Eckhardt at jewel@chartermi.net. *Views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily the views of Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth-Rehabilitation Services.*

Communication Matters is available on the web at: www.michigan.gov/mrs.

Videoconferencing Service Model *continued...*

signs. At lower frame rates, the image appears jerky and visual communication is impaired. For this reason, a dedicated T1 line is required, as well as high quality video conferencing equipment. Clarity of sign language communication is vital for a successful videoconferencing service.

Utah used a survey evaluation, given during three 10-day periods of usage throughout the first year. Some of the uses of the service over the first year included:

- Remote planning meetings for service provision in rural areas. These meetings included individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing.
- Remote interpreting.
- Vocational rehabilitation evaluations
- Mental health counseling. Utah employs mental health counselors who are fluent in American Sign Language.
- Monthly meetings of rehabilitation counselors for the deaf.
- Rehabilitation counselors who are deaf attend staff meetings with remote interpreting.
- Sign Language interpreter mentoring. Trained deaf individuals mentor sign language interpreters for language development. This means of skills development was previously unavailable to interpreters in rural areas..

In Utah, as in Michigan, “serving individuals who live in rural areas is difficult, and serving the Deaf and hard of hearing population is even more complicated. Those complicated needs include the lack of service providers, both those who can sign directly to the client, as well as interpreters who can facilitate communication for the client.” The use of videoconferencing can help to meet the demands of rural issues, rehabilitation needs, and cultural sensitivity.

A New Guide: Hearing Aid & Assistive Technology Purchasing

The “*Guide to Michigan Rehabilitation Services: Hearing Aid & Assistive Technology Purchasing*” is intended as an optional communication tool for counselors. The purpose of the document is to facilitate the provision of services between audiologists, other hearing-care professionals, and MRS. The committee that designed this document includes: Don Dees, Roy Del Valle, Anahita Lord, Eric Bachman, Bob Beard, and Julie Eckhardt.

Your office should have a small supply of the document and it is on E-Learn in the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Resource Center, it is also attached here.

The following are recommendation for use of this document:

- When a counselor receives a referral from a new hearing-care professional (audiologist, ENT, hearing aid dealer, or general physician), this document may be hand delivered or mailed as a basis for discussion regarding MRS policy and process.
- When preparing to make a referral to a new audiologist or hearing-care professional, this document may serve as an introduction to MRS processes, either hand delivered or mailed (preferably preceded by a conversation) with a cover letter written by the counselor.
- Hearing-care professionals who are currently serving MRS clients may be provided with this document for clarification and reminder regarding MRS processes.
- When a counselor refers a client to an audiologist, this document may be mailed with the authorization.

As a best practice, the committee recommends the document be provided in-person to the hearing-care professional to encourage discussion and relationship building.

Guide to Michigan Rehabilitation Services Hearing Aid & Assistive Technology Purchasing

The intent of this document is to facilitate the provision of services between audiologists, other hearing professionals, and Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) for our joint clientele. Please contact the referring MRS counselor if you have questions or need clarification.

Focus of MRS Services	MRS assists people with disabilities with obtaining and/or maintaining employment. A person with a disability may be eligible for MRS services if the disability interferes with preparing for, finding, or keeping a job. The individual must also require MRS services in order to work.
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Purchase of Hearing Aids and Hearing Assistive Technology	MRS may assist with the purchase of hearing aids and /or hearing assistive technology when part of an individual's plan for employment.
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Procedural Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior written authorization from MRS is required for all goods and services. Payment will be processed once the client has received the hearing aid or other services.• Three evaluations are required before a hearing aid may be purchased using MRS funds:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical Concurrence. An examination by a licensed physician (an ENT/otologist is preferred) no more than six months prior to the purchase of a hearing aid.• Audiometric Evaluation. A certified audiologist must evaluate and document hearing loss within six months prior to authorization for a hearing instrument. <i>Audiology Referral Form RA-62</i> should be used.• Hearing Aid Evaluation. The audiologist is required to identify at least two appropriate hearing aid options. The recommendation must include rationale in terms of the client's work functioning and be recorded on the <i>Audiology Referral Form</i>.• MRS contribution to the purchase of hearing aids is limited to that which meets the functional employment needs of the individual at least cost to the agency. The client has the opportunity to select more costly or cosmetically desirable hearing aids, but is responsible for the difference in cost, plus his or her own portion of the cost as agreed upon with MRS.• The audiologist should document how a hearing aid(s) is essential to the individual's assessment, job preparation or employment. Provide explanation regarding recommended hearing aid features in relation to the individual's employment or training functions.• The least-cost hearing aid option that will provide satisfactory employment functioning should be identified on the <i>Audiology Referral Form</i>. A variety of options may be available to optimize hearing, but may not be strictly necessary for adequate employment functioning. Would another aid, perhaps with less sophisticated circuitry or options, enable the person to perform satisfactorily on the job?
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- MRS is required to consider comparable benefits such as Medicaid or private insurance. If an individual is eligible under Medicaid, MRS may not supplement the payment.
 - A minimum of two comparable written quotations is required for hearing aid(s) which exceed \$1500 per hearing aid, including related services (orientation, fitting, ear molds, support, adjustment, conformity check, batteries, warranties and follow-up). The counselor will arrange for a second quote (see least-cost requirement above).
 - When preparing a hearing aid recommendation, itemize the cost of the instrument, features, and services to aid in comparing quotes. Specify the qualifications of the person providing services (e.g., audiologist, licensed dealer, technician, etc.).
 - MRS clients are strongly encouraged to contribute to the purchase of hearing aids, consistent with the individual's ability. The counselor will discuss this with the client.
 - When a hearing aid(s) is purchased from mail order or another vendor, an audiologist must ensure performance is according to factory specifications. Fitting and follow-up services may be purchased from the audiologist.
 - An audiologist shall perform a conformity check before the 30-day factory-return period expires to ensure fit and function.
 - Routine maintenance of hearing aids and future replacement is generally the responsibility of the client, especially those who are satisfactorily employed.

Identification of Workplace Impacts

MRS may purchase or provide hearing assistive technology, workplace accommodations, counseling and other services when needed. Thorough identification of workplace impacts should accompany hearing aid recommendations and support the rehabilitation process. These may be recorded on the bottom of page one of the *Audiology Referral Form*.

- **Communication Requirements:** Is most (or some) workplace communication one-on-one, in groups, or on a telephone? What background sounds will impact hearing on the job? Specify hearing aid features or assistive technology required in this person's workplace listening environment.
- **Auditory Processing:** Is auditory processing or comprehension impacted by the hearing loss? Is further cognitive or speech-language assessment recommended?